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Myanmar cyclone

**U.S. hostility
hampers relief**

By Sara Flounders

Is the Bush administration really trying to help the people of Myanmar recover from the natural disaster that struck there? Then why is it insisting that the Pentagon be in charge of its aid? And why did it impose sanctions on the country when it knew the cyclone was about to hit?

One of the severest storms of the century slammed into the low-lying, densely farmed Irrawaddy Delta of Myanmar on the Gulf of Bengal on May 2. It is a fertile but underdeveloped region, especially susceptible to flooding. The Delta is home to one fourth of Myanmar's 57 million people. The last tropical cyclone to make coastal landfall was 40 years ago.

Meteorologists had been following Tropical Cyclone Nargis for a week. But when the cyclone hit land it brought with it an unpredicted tidal wave of epic proportions. A wall of water 12 feet high surged seven miles inland.

Over a million people have been left homeless and tens of thousands are missing. The estimates of deaths range from 20,000 to 100,000. Yangon, the former capital and major commercial port city, was left in shambles.

The U.S. corporate media are full of stories on the scale of the disaster and the inability of the government to cope with the relief effort. Completely omitted is any mention of the U.S. government's own abysmal track record in providing disaster relief.

Each news article repeats the demand that Washington be given full military access to Myanmar to deliver emergency sup-

**Missing from the media's lecturing
is mention of the disastrous
U.S. record in Hurricane Katrina.**

plies. There is outrage and shock that Myanmar will not permit U.S. military planes to land or Navy ships to dock. The charge that the Myanmar government cannot possibly be trusted to deliver the supplies is repeated again and again.

What is not reported is that the Bush administration, with criminal calculation and planning, consciously made the relief efforts far more difficult. The day before Cyclone Nargis actually hit Myanmar, but when the approach of the monster storm had already been announced and tracked for a week, President George W. Bush signed a harsh new level of economic sanctions on Myanmar. Sanctions are an act of aggression, a form of economic warfare that specifically targets the poorest and most desperate.

Sanctions imposed as cyclone hit

With all its spy satellites, Washington was far more aware than the people of Myanmar of what was coming. The sanctions made direct U.S. and international donations of emergency funds and aid almost impossible. Xinhua News on May 2 reported that Bush's executive order was worded to "block all property and interests in property of designated individuals and entities determined to be owned or controlled by the govern-

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WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Thousands of Black workers took over New York's bridges and tunnels May 7 in protest over racist verdict. Here, women face arrest at 1 Police Plaza near Brooklyn Bridge.

Police make life hell for youth of color

By Kathy Durkin
New York

Going to the grocery store, visiting a friend and walking home from work or school are all ordinary, everyday occurrences. But not so for hundreds of thousands of people, mostly from African-American and Latin@ communities, who are stopped, questioned, asked for their I.D., searched and often arrested here in New York—and around the country. It happens to many youth and even to children.

At a time when more white people appear to be rejecting racism at the polls, racial profiling by police departments and other state agencies is on the rise. It is systemic and deeply entrenched in the “criminal justice system” nationwide.

Statistics given in new studies and reports starkly bear this out. But the statistics cannot convey the intimidation, anxiety and anger that so many people, especially Black and Latin@ youth, must live with on a daily basis, nor the effect this can have throughout their lives on them and their families.

In the first quarter of this year, New York City police, by their own report, stopped, questioned and/or searched 145,098 people, more than half of them African Americans. At this alarming rate, a record 600,000 people will be stopped this year.

In the last two years, nearly 1 million New Yorkers were harassed by police in this manner—90 percent of them people of color. That’s 1,300 a day. And it’s legally allowed.

These operations, just in the past two years, have put more than 1 million innocent people, mostly African-American and Latin@, into the huge police database; they are subject to future criminal investigations merely by their inclusion there.

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) is challenging the legality of these potentially discriminatory practices and demanding information on the

database kept by the NYPD—which the department refuses to turn over. It contains personal information on everyone stopped by police, though the vast majority—90 percent—have not been charged with any crimes.

The NYCLU is also demanding full disclosure from the NYPD about police shootings in this city. The full story of this horror is not known. In addition to the terrible, tragic and totally unjustified killings of unarmed individuals like Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo, Ousmane Zongo and Patrick Dorismund, countless other people of color have been shot. Yet the NYPD refuses to reveal what proportion of those shot over the last 10 years have been members of oppressed nationalities. In the two years prior to that, it was 90 percent. (nyclu.org)

Another aspect of the NYPD’s racial profiling scheme is the campaign of terror targeting youth for possessing miniscule amounts of marijuana. This, too, usually happens in communities of color, even though social studies show at least as high a rate of marijuana use among white youth. In 2007 alone, police arrested more than 100 people per day, or 39,700 in total, for this so-called crime.

The NYCLU has just issued a report entitled, “The Marijuana Arrest Crusade in New York City: Racial Bias in Police Policy 1997-2007,” by Prof. Harry G. Levin and Deborah Peterson Small. It describes the NYPD’s campaign against oppressed youth. Of the nearly 400,000 people arrested in that 10-year period, 205,000 were African Americans and 122,000 were Latin@s. This represented a tenfold increase over the previous 10-year period.

Since decriminalization in 1977, the possession of a small amount of marijuana has not constituted a “crime” in New York City—as long as it is not shown in public. Possession since then has been merely a “violation,” such as speeding and other traffic infractions.

However, the police frequently stop Black and Latin@ youth and then arrest

them on the charge of misdemeanor possession—when, most of the time, this is not the case. High school students are kept in jail overnight until they go to court. Then they are pressured into a plea bargain, usually with an overworked, court-appointed attorney representing them.

In a city where police can gun down a young man like Sean Bell just hours before his wedding and get off with not even a slap on the wrist, youth stopped by cops never know what might happen to them.

These youth are then labeled with criminal records, which will follow them for the rest of their lives and can create future obstacles for them in higher education, employment and housing. They’re also driven into the “criminal justice” system—their fingerprints and photographs go into the NYPD database—when they’ve done nothing wrong.

It is well known that there is serious drug abuse in many high-pressure professions in this city, yet the police don’t occupy financial centers or carry out random searches in wealthy neighborhoods.

Rafael Mutis, coordinator of 7 Neighborhood Action Partnership Network, which works to repeal the draconian New York State Rockefeller drug laws, explains that “drug use” has become a pretext for stop-and-frisk searches in low-income neighborhoods. “They don’t go after people on Wall Street,” he said, “where there’s a daily snowstorm” of cocaine use. (highbridgehorizon.com)

It is no coincidence that police repression has increased even as billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his Wall Street cronies are trying to make New York City a haven for the super-rich, and the real-estate tycoons are gentrifying working-class neighborhoods as fast as they can. “Law-enforcement” agencies are helping them out by stepping up the intimidation of low-income and oppressed people and to suppress opposition and try to drive them further out of the city.

All progressive people need to show solidarity with the oppressed communities, especially the youth, in this struggle against police repression. □

ICE raids spark community resistance

By Joanie Marquardt & Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

Police of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) department have been very busy in the Bay Area since May Day. They have invaded restaurants and rounded up undocumented workers in San Francisco, threatened students outside their high schools and homes in Oakland and Berkeley, and—true to their name—sent a wave of terror and fear through immigrant communities here in the East Bay.

Despite the recent raids, however, immigrant rights organizations, neighborhoods and students are fighting back.

On May 2, ICE conducted raids on 11 Bay Area restaurants belonging to the Taqueria El Balazo chain, arresting 63 women and men workers on the spot. But this Gestapo-like offensive did not go unchallenged.

The following Monday, May 5, some 300 people demonstrated in front of the local ICE offices in the San Francisco financial district. Signs read, “ICE is a terrorist organization!” “Open borders, open minds!” and “No one is illegal!” The Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition initiated the action and the community responded. Representatives of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the San Francisco Labor Council and California state representatives all addressed the crowd.

Félix Fuentes from the Bay Area Labor & Immigrant Committee said that ICE had “violated all the rights of the workers ... and we are here to tell ICE that we are NOT scared and they will hear more from us.”

California State Sen. Carol Migden reminded the crowd that San Francisco is a so-called sanctuary city where these raids should not be happening. She added that if these workers are indeed undocumented, “then we should make them documented.”

Even workers from Taqueria El Balazo who had been arrested at work by ICE came and bravely addressed the crowd. José Sánchez López, employed as a cook for almost seven years and the father of three children, wore his electronic monitoring device locked around one ankle. He had been released from federal ICE custody pending immigration hearings

and was required to wear this unattractive accessory.

Sanchez said the ICE agents went through the workers’ lockers and took things, including his driver’s license. He told the newspaper El Mensajero, “I pay my taxes. ... I’m one of those people who goes from my house to work, and on the weekends I take walks with my family.”

Later in the week, police and Department of Homeland Security vans drove menacingly through the San Francisco Mission neighborhood, which is mostly Latin@. Neighborhood organizers posted warnings throughout the community and on the Internet.

On May 6, ICE moved into the East Bay communities, raiding several homes and rounding up undocumented community members and students. In Oakland, Homeland Security and ICE vehicles were spotted outside one of the high schools. Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums promised that no ICE agents would be allowed on school campuses. However, ICE vehicles continued to be spotted around schools. Berkeley school officials made a similar promise, but the raids continued in the homes and workplaces of undocumented immigrants.

State Assemblywoman Loni Hancock issued a statement sharply criticizing the ICE raids and reminding the government that both Berkeley and Oakland are sanctuary cities for immigrants and their families.

On May 9, students at Berkeley High School were so incensed about the ICE attacks that they formed a new organization: Fighting for Immigrant Rights and Equality (FIRE). “FIRE beats ICE” is their slogan. The group announced that its first action would be to form a protective human chain around the school as a strong message to the government that students have a right to a safe education at their school. FIRE is also making plans for a day of protest later in May that will include teach-ins, music, a rally and a carne asada barbeque.

The May 1 Coalition, the organization that led a major demonstration for immigrant rights on May 1, also announced its intention to organize fightback actions against the San Francisco ICE roundups. □

Asian-Pacific peoples hit U.S. occupation



PHOTO: JONNA BEBEH

The struggle of Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific region against U.S. occupation was the focus of a May 6 meeting at the International Action Center in New York. The meeting was co-hosted by the IAC, the Philippine organization BAYAN USA and Asia Pacific Action.

Dulphing Ogan, an Indigenous leader of the Blaan people from Sarangani Province, Mindanao, Philippines, was in the city to attend the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He spoke on large-scale mining plunder in Mindanao and on human rights and the right to self-determination in the Philippines for Indigenous peoples.

Jesse Lokahi Heiwa of the Hawai’i Solidarity Committee gave an update on the continuing struggle for self-determination there and the long struggle against U.S. occupation.

— Sara Flounders

Cynthia McKinney supports fight for water

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

The Truth Commission for Water Rights on May 3 heard the experiences of Detroit and Highland Park, Mich., residents who are being denied their human right to water. The Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO) organized the daylong event of multimedia and firsthand presentations.

Water service was cut off to more than 40,000 Detroit residences last year, making those homes uninhabitable.

Testimony included the DVD movie “The Water Front” by Liz Green, which documents Highland Park residents’ fight against water rates since they were increased by a state-appointed manager to “balance” a budget deficit. A disastrous human toll ensued: lost custody of children; lost homes to foreclosure when unpaid and unpayable water bills are transferred to property taxes; and even lost life itself from the stress of the struggle to live under such conditions, as happened to two of the main spokespeople in the movie.

Personal testimony filled in more details. An Alger Street resident explained that water service was turned off to her entire neighborhood when some residents didn’t schedule appointments to have new automated, centrally monitored water meters installed—equipment that makes meter reader jobs unnecessary. When organized residents protested to the City Council, the water was restored.

Cynthia McKinney, a former Congress member and Green Party presidential candidate, summarized the deliberations of the truth commission.

McKinney stressed that water rights are not only of local or state concern, but a national and international issue. She pointed out that 36 states faced “water wars,” and that in her hometown of Atlanta, water rates were rising by 170 percent.

McKinney stated, “It is incomprehensible ... that elected officials on the federal level in the U.S. Congress continue to fund a war, to the tune of \$722 million per day, when people are getting their water shut off. It is unacceptable.”

“Is Detroit a victim of ‘Hurricane America’?” she asked, likening the water crisis in the predominantly Black city of Detroit to the unacceptable lack of government response to Hurricane Katrina.

“Just as survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita formed an International Tribunal to take their issues to the United Nations, so this truth commission decided to work with other organizations ... [to] have the General Assembly of the United Nations describe the U.S. as human rights abuser.”

McKinney addressed the case of the Rev. Edward Pinkney, a leader of the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers, who has been in jail in Benton Harbor, Mich., for six months in response to his defiance of developers’ plans for a land grab. “The problem in Benton Harbor,” she said, “is some people have decided to steal the land that belongs to the people of Benton Harbor to make it a playground for the wealthy.”

She asked, “Is that what is in store for the city of Detroit? We can’t ignore what is going on right next door.”

McKinney recently returned from Mexico City, where 10,000 women marched in the main plaza to block the privatization of their

electricity and their oil, “moving from protest to resistance.” She stated, “The truth commission acknowledges that people in the city of Detroit have moved from protest to resistance to defend their right to water. The truth commission supports them.”

The commission proposed conducting hearings throughout the Great Lakes region, beginning with communities served by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department.

Other proposals from the commission included enforcing city, state and federal laws and regulations for the right to water—for example, fighting for the City Council Health and Safety Committee to declare water shut-offs illegal under the city charter; investigating corporate privatization goals for the Detroit water department, including the role of federal judge John Feikens; investigating how municipal bond sales siphon wealth away from human needs; and the relationship between bond sales and elected officials.

Along with Cynthia McKinney, the truth commissioners included Rhonda Anderson, environmental justice activist from the Sierra Club; the Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellerman of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church; Jasmine Kramer, youth member MWRO; Diane Bukowski, reporter for Michigan Citizen and TV host; Harold Spence, Citizens’ District Council activist; Raphael Robinson, former water department worker; Ronald Bass, MWRO Utilities Commission; Bankole Thompson, senior editor of the Michigan Chronicle newspaper; and Willie Baptist, Poverty Initiative Scholar-in-Residence at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, who co-chaired the commission. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Two more UAW locals strike GM

Autoworkers in UAW Local 31 in Fairfax, Kan., who make one of General Motors’ most popular new vehicles, the Chevrolet Malibu, went on strike May 5. The 2,700 members are demanding that GM not suspend seniority rules for various job assignments. Given that sales of the Malibu are up 32 percent over the same time period last year, the longer the strike continues, the more GM suffers. Another strike, by 1,800-member Local 602 in Lansing, Mich., has been going on since April 17. There, the issues are also work rules as well as grievance procedures. These two locals join nearly 30 GM plants currently closed or partly shut due to the months-long strike at GM parts supplier American Axle.

Truckers stage May Day actions

Truckers called for a coast-to-coast slowdown on May Day to protest the all-time high of \$4.20 a gallon for diesel fuel. It now costs independent truckers \$525 to fill an average 125-gallon tank. The truckers called on all motorists to join their protest against high fuel prices by driving five miles below the speed limit. Truckers at New Jersey ports staged a two-day strike beginning on April 30 to protest high fuel and energy prices and to support the longshore workers on the West Coast, who struck for eight hours on May Day against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The truckers started their job action with a morning rally at the Vince Lombardi Truck Stop at Exit 18 on the New Jersey Turnpike. (E-mails from Labor Exchange, May 1)

Part-timers unionize at Michigan college

Part-time professors at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn, Mich., approved forming a union by mail-in vote on May 7. A group representing the nearly 600 adjunct faculty members began organizing the Adjunct Faculty Organization, an affiliate of the Michigan branch of the Federation of Teachers, more than a year ago. This win follows the highly favorable April 30 contract negotiated by part-timers at Wayne State University. (Detroit News, May 8)

Letter Carriers support moratorium

Branch 214 of the Letter Carriers union, which represents 2,500 workers in 11 cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, voted unanimously on May 7 for a resolution calling for a moratorium on home foreclosures, utility shut-offs and evictions. Citing the fact that nearly 10 percent of the homes of U.S. workers could be foreclosed this year, the resolution noted that a bill calling for a two-year moratorium on foreclosures was recently introduced in the Michigan State Senate. This is the first union resolution from outside of Michigan to support the call for such a moratorium. (union e-mail, May 10)

Discrimination suit against Bloomberg

Fifty-four women recently joined a class-action lawsuit filed against Bloomberg, the financial services and media company founded by New York City’s billionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg. The lawsuit, initiated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission last September with only three complainants, charges that the women were demoted or their pay cut after becoming pregnant and taking maternity leave. The commission is reaching out to 478 women who took maternity leave beginning in 2002. (New York Times, May 2)

Actors end contract talks—for now

Representatives of the Screen Actors Guild on May 6 ended three weeks of contract talks with Hollywood production companies after no agreement was reached. Substantial issues remain involving compensation for programming delivered by new electronic media. It seems the producers offered a new-media package different from what the Writers Guild won in February, and SAG wants to make it better for actors. The following day the producers began talks with a smaller actors’ union whose contract also expires on June 30. (New York Times, May 7)

Saluting Rosie the Riveter

If workers are the unsung heroes of capitalist society, then women workers are the invisible heroes. But there is at least one memorial to women workers in this country, and it’s because of a war. In 2000 the “Rosie the Riveter Memorial: Honoring American Women’s Labor During WWII” was opened at the site of the former Kaiser Shipyard No. 2 in Richmond, Calif. Designed by visual artist Susan Schwartzberg and landscape architect/environmental sculptor Cheryl Barton, the memorial commemorates the 18 million women of all races who worked in war industries and support services—shipyards, aircraft factories, steel mills, foundries, hospitals and daycare centers—during World War II. When the troops returned, most of the women were eased out of their jobs, and services like daycare were discontinued—until the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s won the revival of some subsidized programs. It’s time to fight for them all over again. □

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for book review

The following letter is in response to a book review by Phebe Eckfeldt that appeared in the April 10, issue of Workers World newspaper. The book is “Broken Justice: a True Story of Race, Sex and Revenge in a Boston Courtroom,” by Dr. Kenneth C. Edelin, and is available at www.brokenjustice.com.

WOW! What a wonderful review. The power of the words used reminds me of the power of the movement which supported me so many years ago. It was that power that helped me to continue on and not give up. Thank you for that and thank you for the wonderful review. It is my goal to wake up America to the threats to women’s reproductive rights which exist today. With your help we will achieve that goal. Again, thanks for the wonderfully powerful review and for all that you do for the oppressed.

—Kenneth C. Edelin, M.D.

China and youth

The Chinese Revolution is worth defending. When I was in high school, I read books such as “Daily Life in Revolutionary China” by Maria Macciocchi, and “The Long Revolution” by Edgar Snow. I learned about a society where the educational system was very different. Instead of the students desperately stressing out to get the best

grades, and doing their best to appease teachers who knew just how to abuse their power over their students, in China the masses of youth were told during the Cultural Revolution that “It is right to rebel.”

This was such an inspiration to me.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was a movement about empowering the people, specifically young people, to help run society. Youth weren’t told to obey. Youth weren’t told to take orders with a smile. Youth were told to stand up and be heard, as they were the future of a socialist society, in which the power belonged to the masses of people.

When I think of today’s schools, which are packed with racist cops, and students being dragged away in handcuffs or frisked for drugs is the norm, I remember what I read about education in Socialist China and that there is another way.

China has backed away from some of its socialist policies, but that is not enough for the U.S. The U.S. wants to reverse everything that was won in 1949 when the Chinese workers and peasants took power. The U.S. wants to rip all of China’s resources, all of China’s labor power, all of China’s land away from the Chinese masses, and return it to their money-grubbing hands of war and empire.

We must not let lies about Tibet get in the way of what is right. The Chinese Revolution is a revolution that every young person should defend!

—Caleb T. Maupin

Protesters file suit over DNC march permits

By Larry Hales
Denver

Organizations intending to march on the Democratic National Convention when it is held here in August are suing the U.S. Secret Service and the City of Denver to ensure their right to demonstrate in the streets and raise a number of serious issues confronting the people of this country.

The lawsuit was announced May 2 by the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the Recreate 68 Alliance, the Troops Out Now Coalition, United for Peace and Justice, the American Indian Movement, Escuela Tlatelolco, Code Pink, Tent State University and many other organizations.

The primary reasons for the lawsuit are to secure march permits and to make the Secret Service reveal hitherto concealed information about its security perimeter.

The Recreate 68 Alliance has worked for over a year to build for protests during the DNC. The coalition has met with local, state and federal officials. It has stated all along its intention to march up to the Pepsi Center on Sunday, Aug. 24, in an anti-war day of action, and for other days after that, all of which have specific

themes, such as a day for political prisoners, another for the environment and another for immigrant rights.

The activists have worked diligently to get a fair permitting system. What came out of the struggle for permits was a lottery, but on the first day of the lottery activists with Recreate 68 realized that the permits they had filled out were not in the stack of permits being considered. This “gaffe” led to the lottery being canceled that day.

While Recreate 68 and other organizations in the alliance secured some permits, the hosting committee for the DNC was able to get a permit for the largest public space in downtown Denver—Civic Center Park.

In a media communiqué on March 21, members of the alliance stated, “The city of Denver has awarded a permit for Civic Center Park on the day before the Democratic National Convention to a ‘party planner’ for the 2008 Democratic Convention Host Committee. By so doing, the city of Denver has given the largest public park in downtown Denver to a private, commercial entity, the Democrats, and denied the people of Denver the opportunity to use their park for political expression during the city-proclaimed

‘extraordinary event’ of the DNC.

“The host committee has already announced that they are hosting a ‘kick-off media party’ on Aug. 23 at Elitch Gardens. If the committee has the financial resources for an event like this, why should they be allowed to monopolize the only available large free space, the only space available to ordinary citizens in downtown Denver, on the day before the DNC, for yet another ‘kickoff party’? To say that this is unfair, and an inappropriate use of public space, is the understatement of the year.”

Activists planning to show their outrage over the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and against U.S. imperialism in general, would rather be organizing for the thousands who will arrive in Denver in late August. But both city and federal officials have demonstrated their unwillingness to allow for dissent, and so made the filing of a lawsuit inevitable.

Regardless of the outcome decided by the courts, people will still protest. The Recreate 68 Alliance has seen to it that people’s concerns about the possibility of reaction from the state are kept in the forefront.

There has been a great deal of violence-baiting of Recreate 68 because of

the tragic events in Chicago 40 years ago that its name refers to. In fact, the onus for the violence then and today belongs on the state forces.

For its part, Recreate 68 has issued a statement of nonviolence: “We are committed to resisting and overturning a system of violence inflicted daily on people of this country and the world, and against the natural environment, by political and corporate power, in the pursuit of profit. We are resolved that our group will not instigate violence against human beings as a means to end this system of violence and injustice. However, we recognize the right of the people to self-defense and community defense.”

Though this year is politically a complex one, especially with the real possibility that a Black man could be elected president, propelled by a movement of the oppressed Black masses, the role of the Democratic Party as an imperialist party has not changed.

It is important to be aware of the movement behind Obama and even more of that movement’s fluidity as oppression continues under a system controlled by rich white men. It is this system that the thousands of protesters will be condemning come August here in Denver. □

After 2006 power outage

Fight-back wins \$63M settlement

By Mary Owen
Queens, N.Y.

The Western Queens Power for the People Campaign (PFP) has announced a groundbreaking \$63-million proposed settlement in the state’s case against the utility company Con Edison for a July 2006 power outage in the New York City borough of Queens.

The agreement comes after nearly two years of struggle by the people of Western Queens for justice and restitution for damage caused by the utility’s longest outage, which left working-class and immigrant communities with no or low power for 10 days during a sweltering summer heat wave.

“Western Queens Power for the People Campaign still firmly believes that Con Edison’s negligence caused the power outage and that our community’s suffering was needless. Today’s settlement doesn’t change that,” said Alyssa Bonilla of PFP. The grassroots group was formed during the outage. It served as a community voice in the state’s investigation and subsequent settlement discussions and also opposed a rate increase for the utility.

“We agreed to this proposal,” added Bonilla, “because it is the best possible outcome for the community, given the inadequacy of the existing laws.”

The proposed settlement calls for a written apology from Con Ed, to appear on customer bills in English and Spanish, and \$17 million in Con Ed stockholder funds to go directly to the affected Western Queens communities. About half of that money will pay for refunds of \$100 or more to customers, mainly residents of the affected communities. The balance will pay for tree planting and other neighborhood greening projects, beyond any already planned for the area by the city or funded by other sources.

This is the first time in proceedings of the New York State Public Service

Commission that Con Ed funds were allocated specifically for communities that suffered through an outage. Contributing substantially to this breakthrough was the community fight-back led by PFP—from petitioning, testifying at hearings, and holding community meetings and marches to picketing Con Ed’s headquarters and sitting at the table in direct negotiations with the company and the state.

The settlement also requires Con Ed to pay up to \$500,000 for a study to assess the economic and public health costs of damages caused by the outage, which can be used to improve the way the utility giant reimburses the victims of future outages. Con Ed will also be prevented from passing on \$46 million in outage-related costs to its customers.

Some local elected officials criticized the utility giant for not coming up with more money. However, state Assembly member Richard Brodsky (D-Westchester), who chairs the Corporations, Authorities



WESTERN QUEENS POWER FOR THE PEOPLE CAMPAIGN

Events like this 'flashlight march' kept the pressure on Con Ed.

and Commissions Committee, called the hard-won settlement “an unprecedented victory for real people in New York.”

“Western Queens Power for the People Campaign understands better than anyone that this settlement does not come close to compensating the community for all its losses,” said Bonilla. “But it will put money directly into the pockets of residents, many of whom are struggling, and it will help green sections of Queens that have some of the lowest rates of open

space in the entire city. We hope the laws will be changed in the future so other communities do not have to suffer like we did. It just may be that the time of the privately owned utility company has seen its day.”

The proposed settlement was filed with the NYS Public Service Commission on April 24, and must be approved by the full PSC before its provisions are implemented. Highlights and the full text of the settlement are available at www.power-forthepeople.info. □

Police declare ‘open season’ on Black community

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The caught-on-videotape kicking and beating of three young Black men—Brian Hall, Dwayne Dyches and Pete Hopkins—by more than a dozen Philadelphia police officers May 5 has once again put “the City of Brotherly Love” in the national spotlight for police brutality.

An 11-minute video, filmed by a FOX29 helicopter, shows cops with guns drawn pulling the three men out of their car and then repeatedly kicking, stomping and hitting them with fists and clubs while the three are facedown on the roadway.

In another incident just one night earlier, Philadelphia police grabbed Anthony Pleasant off his bike and beat him so badly he ended up hospitalized with a fractured

nose, swellings to his head and multiple body bruises. “It’s like open season on any Black person—period,” declared Pleasant’s aunt, Daveena Pratt.

Mayor Michael Nutter tried to excuse the cops’ brutality, saying they were “devastated” and “outraged” over the shooting death of police sergeant Stephen Liczbinski the weekend before. Nutter recently instituted a police “stop-and-frisk” policy that many fear will lead to more such incidents, especially given the department’s history of brutality and racism toward communities of color.

At a news conference, Eldridge Suggs, attorney for Dyches, suggested his client was targeted because of his strong resemblance to Eric Floyd, the man eventually captured and charged with Liczbinski’s shooting. The victims’ attorneys claim

police concocted a story that the men were suspects in a shooting to cover up a case of mistaken identity.

According to city officials, this incident is an aberration, but the scenes caught on video are all too reminiscent of an incident prior to the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, when Thomas Jones was nearly lynched by at least 20 Philadelphia cops who beat him and shot him five times.

Since 2006, police have fatally shot 35 people in Philadelphia, more than in any similar period since 1980. Already in 2008 there have been three reported deadly shootings by police, including one of an unarmed bystander killed by a cop who fired 11 shots into a house where a number of people, including children,

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From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

Sean Bell's second slaying



Taken from an April 25 audio column. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Mumia's column and www.millions4mumia.org to read updates on the campaign to free him.



It was a classic “only in America” moment. The bench trial of three killer cops in New York City, charged with firing some 50 shots into a car, killing one man, Sean Bell, and wounding two others—all unarmed.

The case rushed across America, spreading outrage in each city.

Initially, the cops moved to have the trial transferred to a site upstate—to the rural, northern tiers. This motion denied, they opted for a bench trial (or trial by a single judge), not trusting their fates to a so-called jury of “citizens” they are sworn to serve and protect.

Time, it seems, has proven that they made the right decision—for, predictably, the judge acquitted them of all charges, arguing that the witnesses gave conflicting testimony.

By so doing, the court essentially ruled that Bell's killing was justified; no crime was committed. The defense utilized the “bad company” argument—that Bell was shot and killed because he was among “the wrong crowd.”

That such an argument swayed Supreme Court Justice Arthur Cooperman (in New York state, unlike most other states, the trial court is termed the Supreme Court, and the state's highest court is their Court of Appeals) is a measure of how devalued Black life is, and how easy Black men are to demonize and disparage.

If none of the cops knew the men, what does it matter what their backgrounds were? They could've been lawyers, basketball stars or cops.

That they were Black men—even unarmed Black men—was deemed sufficient to unload on them, because in America, their color was crime enough.

So, 22-year-old Sean Bell joins Amadou Diallo and others guilty of the capital offense of WWB—Walking While Black.

And while millions of Black and white Americans thrill at political illusions of “post-racism,” Sean Bell's case proves how deeply deadly race can still be.

Even rumors of a weapon were enough to unleash 50 shots—or should we say “alleged rumors” for there were no guns found in Bell's car. In the past, wallets, candy bars, keys and packs of cigarettes were deemed sufficient to provoke such malicious responses. Now, nothing is required. Sean Bell was shot to death and his friends, Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, were seriously wounded. Shot and killed for being with “the wrong crowd.”□

PRIDE & PROTEST Shutting down NYC for Sea

Disbelief and anger were overwhelming in New York after a judge let off the three cops who had shot 50 times, killing young African American Sean Bell and wounding two of his friends early on the morning of his planned wedding. On May 7, several thousand people, the majority Black workers, blocked tunnels and bridges into Manhattan in protest over the verdict. Sharon Black of the Troops Out Now Coalition was one of those arrested at the Triborough Bridge in Harlem, and wrote the following letter to her son. Dolores Cox and Andy Stapp (see quotes) were arrested at the Brooklyn Bridge.

Dear Steven,

Don't worry about me. The action in Harlem was absolutely amazing.

The big business media will probably lie about the numbers. But I know for a fact that hundreds of people were involved in the Harlem protest—certainly well over 500 participated.

A sea of people stretched from the subway at 125th Street to Third Avenue. You could tell that people were spontaneously joining right from the streets. One man looked at the signs I was carrying and asked, “Please, can I have one?” The sidewalks and streets were so packed it was hard to move.

Several people in electric wheelchairs fearlessly rode with the group. Children and young people, families and older workers all took part in the protest. Workers still in their hospital uniforms marched. Neighborhood participants brought homemade signs.

I had to run to catch up with people who appeared to be organizers with the National Action Network so I could sign up to participate in the civil disobedience. As you know, I'm so new to New York City that I didn't know a single person—but things are the same pretty much in every city. Look for the person carrying the clipboard.

Sure enough, I met the coordinator—a dignified man, younger than myself, probably older than you—who shook my hand and took my information, including my Baltimore I.D. He made a special effort to both welcome me to Harlem and thank me for participating.

I can't put it into words—maybe it was the sincerity of our exchange or something a little intangible—but it struck me



at that moment how vitally important it was for white workers to show support for the Black community and to put themselves on the line on this issue.

Opposing racism is always important, but at a time when all of us are under such severe economic attack, it's absolutely critical.

Later, in the jail itself, I was happy to see that a small but significant number of young white people had participated. Of course, we have to continue to try even harder—not only because it is the just and the right thing to do—but literally for working-class survival.

At 4 p.m. 150 people left the main group and began to march to the Triborough Bridge. About 40 of us broke down into three groups. This was done so quickly and smoothly that you would have believed we had rehearsed it hundreds of times.

Twelve in the group I was with ran to one end of the three main arteries of the bridge. We locked arms and stopped traffic. An MTA bus was idled in front of us—along with scores of cars. This happened at the other two arteries simultaneously.

We had done it—we had shut the bridge down!

We sat down and raised our fists in the power salute waiting for police to arrest us. Scores of police marched in step to waiting police wagons where other demonstrators had gathered, chanting in our support.

It was all exciting. Of course, once they get those overly tight plastic cuffs on you and push you into the police wagon, the real process starts. You begin to think, “What a drag—the best I can do is

Sharon Black handcuffed after group blocked Triborough Bridge.

WW PHOTO: MIKE EILENFELDT

endure this with dignity.”

But this was different. The cops certainly had control of us—we were locked up and behind bars—but the magnitude of the action, the fact that the jail was filled with over 200 determined and conscious

people, turned the tables a bit.

The fact that the Black working class had shut the city down, even if for a brief time, created a sense of empowerment and accomplishment even behind the walls of the jail.

Of course, that didn't stop all the games that cops play. They took the arrestees from Harlem to the wrong police precinct—took us out of the wagons—put us back in—and then drove around in circles. This delayed the process and extended the pain of being handcuffed.

But the courage of the women I was jailed with made up for these inconveniences.

One was a construction worker. She had gone to work at 5 in the morning; when she got off, she went directly to the demonstration. She spontaneously decided to be arrested, despite the fact that she might jeopardize her job. She explained that she had two sons and she worried that both could become Sean Bells.

A 68-year-old grandmother was so proud of her daughter. Pointing to her



Dolores Cox

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

I WAS SHOCKED when they announced the verdict on the Sean Bell case. I saw the sadness and disbelief of the people coming out of the courthouse and realized I was crying.

I had hoped that maybe this once the system would do the right thing and truth and justice would prevail. But the historical violence and terrorism of the past against Black men and boys was still reigning supreme.

It wasn't until I was actually there at One Police Plaza that I suddenly understood more clearly that to make change happen there has to be sacrifice, commitment and courage. And that each one of us has to do our part in whatever way we can. As frightening as going to jail was, it was also one of the proudest and most rewarding things I've done in my life.

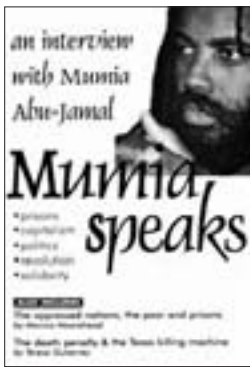
—Dolores Cox



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

WE HAVE TO STOP THESE ATROCITIES. Michael Stewart, Patrick Dorismund, Ousmane Zongo—police killings of unarmed Black people in New York have been going on for decades. If the cop who tortured Abner Louima had killed him, that cop would probably be free now. The slavery-era Dred Scott decision still applies—Black people don't have any rights that the cops respect. If the highest-ranking Black police officer in the city, Douglas Ziegler, could be pulled out of his SUV a few days ago by white cops at gunpoint, then who is safe?

—Andy Stapp (second from right in photo above)



\$4.50

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Order books by Mumia Abu-Jamal online at www.Leftbooks.com

n Bell

Spellman College tee shirt, she explained that her daughter had graduated from that famous Black school and had moved to Queens after her own wedding a month after the police gunned down Bell. Her daughter's fiancé could have been Sean Bell, she explained.

Later in the wee hours, I spent time joking with a 19-year-old technical college student. She had to take finals the next day and was worried that she was soon going to miss the last train back to New Jersey. Together we did push-ups to break the boredom. She was so proud and happy that she had come.

Perhaps the person with the most to lose was a quiet older woman who had major health problems. Both her legs were badly swollen and she explained to me that she had massive arthritis. Because of back pain, she could barely move. She was one of the organizers of the march—who had attended meetings since the beginning.

Her health problems hadn't stopped her, any more than the young deaf woman who linked arms with me at the foot of the bridge.

I'm now out of jail—but I'm still high on "the power of the people."

The organization and precision of what took place in Harlem, and seeing what was possible, even briefly, proves the power that the workers have. Manhattan is, after all, an island connected by bridges and tunnels. That in and of itself should humble the powers that be.

Love, Mom

Conscious hip-hop to revive 'golden era'

Jasiri X, who started rapping in 1990, says artistic culture "springs from our experiences and spiritual connection and is a tool for change." He sees it as a "survival mechanism."

Any student of the history of the Black musical tradition understands the value of song, stretching all the way back to the field hollers during the times of chattel slavery. While the rhythms and other aspects of the Black musical tradition do indeed come from Africa, the content itself is rooted in the desire of an oppressed people for freedom.

Jasiri uses his music to teach, but sees in it the possibility to make positive change. He works with youth in Pittsburgh and is one of the founders of IHOOD, an organization "created to promote unity among young men, to strengthen and support each individual member's programs and to promote peace in local Pittsburgh neighborhoods."

Jasiri started listening to hip-hop music in the late 1980s—what's known as the golden era, a time when many popular artists were conscious. Now, Jasiri says, "I listen to everything except country, from Rage to Phil Collins to Stevie Wonder."

It was hip-hop music that drove him to be politically active. He wants to connect with other conscious rappers and to usher in a new golden era, where content means something and reflects the conditions people are faced with.

His newest protest song, "Enough is Enough," was written after the three cops that killed Sean Bell were acquitted. The song begins with media coverage of the acquittal, as the music builds with protests in the background and Jasiri chanting, "Enough is Enough." He yells, "We will not surrender!" followed by the lyrics:

*In the war of cops and robbers, the cops are robbers
They on the block with product, filling slots for lock up
You'll get strong armed by the long arm of the law
His small arms were too small to box with em
Shots to them, glocks spittin hot ammo
You'll get the mop handle
You'll get Dialloed or Louimaed
Or even locked up like Mumia
Waitin for that same man who put ya in prison to free ya
See the Bell tolls and if you see a cop wearin jail clothes
I've bet hell froze*



Jasiri recorded the song "Free the Jena 6" in two days. The song was awarded "Hip Hop Political Song of the Year" and "Single of the Year" at the Pittsburgh Hip Hop Awards.

He first heard about the six young Black men, who defended themselves and their community from racist attack, from the Final Call newspaper and e-mail alerts. His urgency in making the song, which became a clarion call, grew from his understanding of culture.

Jasiri says the problem with hip-hop now is that it has been taken over by corporations that use it to make profit, and that a lot of the musicians have to fit a model made for them that has no basis in actual reality.

He says that while many mainstream artists speak of "keeping it real," the images shown in videos and the content of the lyrics reflect a lifestyle that many of the artists who tout it can't even afford to live.

"Reality is hard enough without our youth being bombarded with negative images," especially considering that many young people "internalize the conditions and turn on one another." Ultimately, Jasiri believes that the system itself needs to be thrown out and replaced with one more humane that will put an end to oppression.

To find out more about Jasiri X, including the lyrics to "Free the Jena 6," visit www.myspace.com/JASIRIX.

Mother's Day protest hits police murders

By Stephen Millies
New York

Courageous parents whose children had been killed by cops went to the Manhattan office of New York Gov. David Patterson on Mother's Day, May 11. They demanded justice at a news conference organized by the Justice Committee and Parents Against Police Brutality.

Supporters joined these parents in wearing bloodstained shirts with the names of police victims. Some brought pictures. Everyone demanded justice for Sean Bell.

Parents whose children are murdered by police "never have a happy Mother's Day," said Martha Laureano, a leader of the Justice Committee.

In a letter to the governor, these parents called for "a special prosecutor for victims of police abuse and violence." They want the New York Police Department to leave Juanita Young alone.

Young has never stopped fighting for justice for her son, Malcolm Ferguson, and all victims of police terror. She went to the press conference along with the other parents.

Ferguson was unarmed when he was killed at point-blank range by police officer Louis Rivera on March 1, 2000, in the Bronx. Five days before his death Ferguson had been arrested for protesting the acquittal of the four cops who shot Amadou Diallo 41 times.

Last year a civil court jury determined Officer Rivera was "100 percent responsible" for Ferguson's death and awarded Young over \$10 million. The Bronx district attorney is appealing the just verdict and refuses to reopen the criminal case against

Outside governor's office, parents of gunned-down children with supporters.

WW PHOTO: STEVE MILLIES

this cop. Police continue to threaten and abuse Young and her family.

Young is currently facing criminal charges of assaulting police who invaded her home. They claim the legally blind mother threw a box of cake mix at them.

Margarita Rosario also came to the governor's office. Her son, Anthony Rosario, was shot 14 times and her nephew, Hilton Vega, eight times on March 12, 1995. Both were lying down when they were killed by former bodyguards for ex-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Neither cop was ever charged.

Allene Person came for her 19-year-old son, Timur Person, who was killed by police on Dec. 13, 2006, in the Bronx, while his hands were in the air. Four police bullets were pumped into his body.

Joann Mickins came for her son, Corey Mickins, who was shot a dozen times in his favorite Harlem restaurant by plainclothes



officers on March 13, 2007. Police claim Corey Mickins had a gun, yet there were no fingerprints on the alleged weapon.

Loretta Cerbelli came for her son, Kevin Cerbelli, who was killed inside the 110th Precinct station house in Elmhurst, Queens, on Oct. 25, 1998. "While my son was on the ground, they shot him in the back," said Loretta Cerbelli.

Nicholas Heyward Sr. came for his 13-year-old son, Nicholas Heyward Jr. The young honor student was killed by a housing police officer while playing "cops and robbers" in Brooklyn's Gowanus Houses on Sept. 27, 1994.

Altagracia Mayi came for her son, Manny Mayi Jr., a Queens College honor

student. Manny was chased 16 blocks through Corona, Queens, by a white lynch mob before being killed on March 29, 1991. None of the members of this racist gang was ever indicted; instead, one was later admitted to the police academy.

Doris Busch Boskey sent a letter to the event on behalf of her son, Gidone (Gary) Busch. Busch was shot 12 times by cops in Brooklyn on Aug. 30, 1999, despite witnesses who said he didn't pose a threat to anyone.

None of these killer cops or lynchers was ever prosecuted.

Young told the crowd, "Either we bury this system or we bury our kids." No justice, no peace! □

Lebanese resistance turns back rightist offensive

By John Catalinotto

Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon, popular because of their successful resistance to past Israeli attacks on the country, have answered a provocation from the U.S.-backed Lebanese government and at the same time handed a sharp military defeat to rightist forces, especially in Beirut.

By May 12 heavy fighting between the Hezbollah-led opposition and rightist political factions in the government had died down in the capital, but it continues in Tripoli in the north. (AP, May 12)

The Bush administration is without hesitation behind the Fouad Siniora government. In early May the U.S. once again named Hezbollah a “terrorist” group. Bush, on his way to Israel May 12 to celebrate its takeover of Palestinian land 60 years ago, condemned in a statement what he called “Hezbollah’s recent efforts, and those of their foreign sponsors in Tehran and Damascus, to use violence and intimidation to bend the government and people of Lebanon to their will.” Bush also expressed support for the Lebanese Army.

Most people in Southwest Asia and North Africa—if not the world—consider Bush a war criminal and an enemy of Arab and Muslim peoples.

How regime provoked clashes

Lebanon experienced a bloody, debilitating and indecisive civil war from 1975 to 1990. The Lebanese government today doesn’t want to be seen as provoking another civil conflict, but it also feels threatened by the immense popularity of Hezbollah. It took two steps in early May to force Hezbollah and its allies to either disarm or appear responsible for the restarting of inter-Lebanese fighting.

The government tried to replace the head of Beirut airport security, General Wafiq Shoucair, who reportedly had good

relations with Hezbollah and its ally, the Amal party. Since the airport is located in south Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold, and since this is the main entry to the country, Shoucair’s replacement could put Hezbollah at risk. (Al Ahram Weekly, May 8-14)

The government also ordered the army to destroy Hezbollah’s internal communication system. This system, which is separate from the Lebanese telephone network, was the base of Hezbollah’s communications during the 2006 war, when it stopped and reversed an Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The Israelis could easily disrupt the Lebanese national network.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah’s reaction was immediate. He called the government offensive “a declaration of war” and said that “the communications network is a fundamental component of the weapons of the resistance. Up to now,” he added, “Hezbollah has never used our weapons internally, but we will do so to defend our weapons.” (Junge Welt, May 10)

Walid Jumblatt and other right-wing forces in the government coalition immediately responded with a propaganda attack on Hezbollah. They were unable, however, to mount an effective military attack. Military battles also have a strong political component that pro-imperialist forces often underestimate.

The army itself has troops from all Lebanese communities, and the commanding officers were either unwilling or unable to directly confront Hezbollah, as the right-wing parties ordered the army to do. The army itself took no part in the fighting on either side. Other militia forces representing the government, faced with both the Hezbollah fighters and a general strike in Beirut, quickly collapsed.

After three days of fighting, there were reports that Hezbollah by May 10 controlled much of Beirut and Mount

Lebanon, a Jumblatt stronghold. By May 11 Hezbollah was pulling back and allowing the army to control these areas. The government, in turn, returned Gen. Shoucair to his role in airport security and left Hezbollah’s communications intact.

Struggle is political, not sectarian

The governments of the imperialist countries and the corporate media have painted a false picture of the events in Lebanon. These media say and write incessantly that the fighting is between two religious sects—Shiites and Sunnis—instead of between coalitions of political parties representing different sectors of society.

Understanding who is who in Lebanon counteracts this distortion and helps put the events that led to the fighting in their political and social context.

Washington’s weak position in Lebanon following the Israeli defeat in the 2006 war gives the U.S. an interest in fomenting internal fighting among the Lebanese, as it has done in Iraq and Palestine. Bush had supported and likely helped plan the 2006 Israeli attack, urging then that Hezbollah be crushed, as he does now.

Lebanon’s government coalition, which includes the party led by Jumblatt and right-wing parties from the Christian establishment, also enjoys the support of NATO countries and of Arab governments that are clients of imperialism, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Opposing this pro-imperialist coalition is the Hezbollah-led opposition.

Hezbollah, which means “Party of God,” grew to become the major resistance force after the 1982 Israeli occupation of Lebanon. It finally defeated and drove out the Israeli occupiers in 2000. The party became the main organizer of the large and very poor Shiite community that extends from the south of Beirut to the border with Israel. Hezbollah has reached

out to all communities in Lebanon with aid and assistance.

In July-August 2006 Hezbollah led the organized guerrilla resistance that handed the Israelis another serious defeat. This won it the allegiance of the mostly Shiite south of Lebanon and the respect of the Arab and Muslim masses of all communities inside and outside Lebanon. Its victory inspired fear among the Arab governments that collaborate with imperialism.

The Lebanese army in 2006 did not participate in the fighting against Israel.

The Amal party, also based in the Shiite community, as well as the Lebanese Communist Party and the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun from the Christian community were all allied with Hezbollah during the 2006 fighting, and still are. The cross-sectarian nature of this coalition, along with its deep popular support, refutes the distortions in the imperialist media.

The Israeli assault killed 1,100 Lebanese, almost all civilians, and destroyed much of the infrastructure and housing in southern Lebanon. Despite these horrors, Hezbollah and its allies came out much stronger politically because of the 2006 victory. Nevertheless, the Hezbollah leadership has said it has no intentions of trying to take over and run the Lebanese state.

Instead, over the last 17 months this progressive coalition has been struggling just to get a one-third share of representation in the Lebanese Legislature. It also insists on maintaining its own fighting force to repulse any Israeli aggression.

The political struggle continues. The goal of the coalition led by Hezbollah is to maintain a fighting force on an anti-imperialist basis and to prevent fighting from breaking out on sectarian lines, as this would aid the U.S. and Israel.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

U.S.-backed assault fails to quell Sadr City

By G. Dunkel

For over a month, the puppet Iraqi army, with air strikes and extensive support from U.S. ground forces, has been attacking Sadr City, a part of Baghdad where the poor Shiite population is concentrated and the Mahdi Army, led by Muqtada al-Sadr, has a significant presence.

Some 925 people have died in this fighting and 2,605 have been wounded. Many of them were children, elderly people and other non-combatants. (Christian Science Monitor, May 6)

An Iraqi politician and member of the ruling party of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said that the Mahdi Army agreed to a truce with the Maliki government on May 10. He also said that the Iranian government had brokered the deal. (Reuters, May 12) Despite this truce, heavy fighting broke out again on May 13. (BBC, May 13)

Sadr City is close to the Green Zone, supposedly the U.S. occupation’s most secure area in Iraq and where the Iraqi puppet government and U.S. Embassy are based. Nevertheless, Katyusha rockets and mortars supposedly fired from Sadr City have been reaching the Green Zone. For example, the McClatchy news service’s “Daily Violence in Iraq” reported that a Katyusha “slammed into the Green Zone” on May 8. The Kuwaiti News

Agency reported that eight rockets hit the Green Zone the next day.

While the U.S. government and its Iraqi clients can’t hide the whoosh of the Katyushas and the explosions they cause, they have admitted very little damage—but won’t allow independent media to see for themselves.

Even though the U.S. command limited its role to close support of the Iraqi puppet division fighting in Sadr City, the fighting caused a noticeable increase in U.S. casualties. Washington will have even fewer troops in July to use on these missions if those sent as part of Bush’s “surge” in January 2007 start coming home, as has been announced.

U.S. military officials released figures May 12 showing “more than 700 attacks a month in Baghdad in March and again in April, primarily at American and Iraqi troops—nearly triple the level in February, before the Sadr City clashes began.” (New York Times, May 13)

U.S. strategy had been to push the Mahdi Army into the northern part of Sadr City out of range of the Green Zone by building a wall along Al Quds Street and then supporting the Iraqi puppet army’s attacks. This strategy hasn’t been working. The Mahdi Army was fighting from prepared positions. U.S. teams escorting Iraqi construction workers have run into heavy fire and pre-laid mines have

knocked their tanks out of action. These teams couldn’t complete their mission. (Los Angeles Times, May 11)

Swiss Radio is reporting that the wall is 80-percent finished, but the rockets are still raining down on the Green Zone.

While a May 11 article in the New York Times said, “Under the terms of the agreement, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki’s government would gain control over Sadr City, now a largely lawless area,” a similar truce in March fell apart when the U.S. began constructing the wall, touching off the current struggle.

A live report on National Public Radio May 11 reported that serious fighting was going on around the checkpoint where the reporter was embedded. Another report about a U.S. air strike in Sadr City after the truce was supposedly in effect states that 50 people were killed and at least 147 wounded.

The Iraqi resistance to the U.S. invasion and occupation has been tenacious, even if it hasn’t been united on a national basis. It has been tested and tried over the past five years, sometimes advancing and sometimes retreating. The Mahdi Army too, is still a fighting force, and the reported truce with the puppet government can turn out to be just a temporary lull in the fighting.

In the latest news from Baghdad, the U.S. military admitted on May 12 that

resistance fighters had fired a shoulder-to-air missile two days earlier at one of its Apache helicopters flying over Sadr City. While the missile exploded before reaching its target, the incident worried U.S. commanders so much that they rerouted two other helicopters carrying news crews away from the area. □

Police declare ‘open season’ on Black community

Continued from page 5

were celebrating New Year’s Eve.

Showing little concern for victims of police brutality, John McGrody, vice president of the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police, said that “innocent until proven guilty in a court of law” means nothing to him. (Philadelphia Daily News, May 8)

In the same issue of the Daily News, columnist Michael Smerconish, a former attorney for the FOP, openly advocated that police should shoot suspects to save the time and expense of jury trials! Smerconish has spent decades trying to get Black revolutionary journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal executed on frame-up charges. □

From WW of June 24, 1967

U.S. rulers plotted with Israeli puppets for war of aggression against Arab masses

Workers World, now in its 50th year of publication, is reprinting articles from past issues. This article was written after the 1967 war between Israel and a group of Arab countries. WW's youth group, Youth Against War & Fascism, had just organized a demonstration at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York protesting U.S.-Israeli aggression. Today, 60 years since the Israeli state was brutally planted on Palestinian land, it continues to do Washington's bidding in the Middle East.



By Milt Neidenberg

The Washington-Israeli scheme to consolidate the gains of Israel's aggression against the Arab states has become increasingly clear in the last week. The plot is simple. While U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Arthur Goldberg rambled on about "cease-fires" and "peaceful solutions for all parties concerned" and piously appealed for "the territorial integrity of all Middle East countries," Israel's armed forces pushed deeper into Arab territory. These sanctimonious mouthings at Security Council meetings were intended to mask the U.S. commitment to Israeli aggression and prepare the way for Israel to bargain and legitimize the fruits of its aggression.

The Israeli government, its bankers, politicians and military brass, acted as agents for U.S. imperialism's vast and strategic Middle East oil empire that oppresses the Arab masses.

While President Lyndon Johnson double-talked about finding diplomatic solutions to the United Arab Republic's blockade of Israeli shipping, Israeli officials were telling a different story in Tel Aviv.

Washington gave Tel Aviv the green light

In an article in Israel Digest of June 2, 1967, headed "America's Unambiguous Stand," it was related how Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, following his briefings with Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who had just returned from secret meetings in Washington, told the Knesset (Parliament), "The Israeli government was deeply impressed by the unambiguous stand of the U.S. in favor of the safeguarding of passage in these international waters."

Though couched in diplomatic language, it was clear to the Israeli leaders that the U.S. government would sponsor Israel in a war against the Arab states.

If further evidence were needed that Israel had the green light from the U.S., it was revealed in an interview in U.S. News and World Report of April 17 following the prime minister's trip to the U.S. Eshkol was asked if Israel would expect U.S. help in a showdown. He answered, "When we asked for more arms we were told ... don't spend your money. We are here. The Sixth Fleet is here."

Dayan's Vietnam training

The U.S. commitment had been put into specific terms a number of months earlier when Maj. Gen. Moshe Dayan was invited by the U.S. to visit Vietnam. The "hero" of the 1956 Sinai invasion took a leave of absence from his post as a member of the Knesset to make this very special and significant trip. What made his trip so ominous is that prior to his leaving for Vietnam, this soldier-politician pos-

ing as a "journalist" held secret briefings with the top U.S. advisers to President Johnson: Walt Rostow, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and Gen. Maxwell Taylor—the architects of the U.S. aggression against Vietnam. On his return from Vietnam, Dayan once again went into top-level briefings with McNamara, Under Secretary of State Nicholas B. Katzenbach, and the top Army brass.

This information was reported in an article in the May 1967 Jewish Currents by Louis Harab, in a review of Dayan's book, "Diary of the Sinai Campaign."

According to the article, Dayan was supposed to make recommendations to the top U.S. brass on how the war in Vietnam could be won. He interviewed U.S. generals in battle zones and accompanied units in operation. It is difficult to understand how this military puppet could give any advice to his imperialist masters who "wrote the book" on waging aggressive wars against oppressed people struggling for liberation. The truth is that he went to Vietnam, not as a journalist, not as a teacher, but as a student with notebook and pencil in hand. He was in Vietnam to learn the ways of waging wars of aggression against liberation struggles, to observe the destructive effects of napalm and anti-personnel weapons and how terror bombing affects the civilian population.

Is it not a testimony to the collusion and conspiracy of the U.S. and Israel governments that less than a year later Dayan, as Israeli Defense Minister, was putting his grisly lessons into practice on the Arab people?

While Johnson cynically talked about "neutrality" and "territorial integrity," Washington was in a state of jubilation over the results of the Israeli aggression. Their pupil had learned his lesson well.

U.S. bank 'aids' puppets

In the midst of all this military scheming prior to the invasion, another event underscores the master-servant relationship. In March of this year, Walter Sauer, vice president of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, turned up in Tel Aviv. (The U.S. Export-Import Bank is a "bankers' bank"—a consortium of large U.S. banks that together have a gigantic money pool to implement U.S. foreign rule.)

According to the Jerusalem Post Weekly of March 20, 1967, a few months before the Israeli invasion, Sauer had private meetings with Eshkol; the governor of the Bank of Israel, David Horowitz; and Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir. These meetings were to discuss Israel's economic "slowdown," as the Jerusalem Post called it, which was in reality a severe economic depression. Number 1 on the agenda was the discussion of how Wall Street financing could bail them out.

What is ironic about the Israel crisis is that it was precipitated by its relations with the U.S. They were in hock to U.S. businesses, who sold them military hardware (Douglas A-4 Skyhawk jet bombers, Hawk missiles, M-48 Patton tanks and other arms) and then loaned them money through interest-bearing Israeli bonds and other loans to pay the bills.

With military spending and payments on the national debt being the two largest items in its budget, Israel was running a debt to the imperialists of over \$400 million a year, a substantial amount for a small state. What further aggravated

the crisis is that Israel buys \$220 million yearly in U.S. goods but exports only \$65 million, a whopping four-to-one unfavorable balance of trade. In the past, Israel was able to meet some of this deficit by the reparations it received from West Germany, but the last payment was made in March. Finance Minister Sapir, typical of Wall Street stooges, blamed the workers for the crisis: "We have eaten and consumed more than we produced ... as if somebody else would foot the bill."

Sauer, who holds the second-highest position in the Export-Import Bank, indicated his pleasure with this sentiment. At a luncheon held in his honor, he voiced his support for the government's economic policy and said he was impressed with the economy, which "seemed far better than the impressions one received in the U.S. press."

While the loyal servant of the Wall Street bankers was favorably impressed and it was clear that he would recommend further loans, Israeli workers were less than impressed with what Sauer called an "economic slowdown."

Israeli workers riot for 'bread or work'

On March 14, the New York Times reported that "rioters protested growing unemployment in Israel, stoned City Hall tonight, smashing windows and damaging the vehicles in the parking lot. ... The disturbance followed an orderly demonstration of several thousand workers ... organized by union committees in the Tel Aviv area. Some marchers said they were unemployed, but most attended as contingents from factories. They chanted 'Bread and work' and 'We are against dismissals.'"

They were protesting about the 100,000 workers (over 10 percent of the work force) who are out on the street, as well as thousands more who are on short workweeks of two and three days. They were protesting against the government plan to use a wave of unemployment as a

club to lower wages and worsen working conditions. Waves of strikes had broken out all over Israel—postal workers, milk delivery workers, garbage collectors and many others in the civil service.

What made the situation even more ominous for the workers was that a further swell of unemployment was expected as the citrus shipping season ended. Army conscripts were being demobilized and students graduated. Workers were so militant that they broke down the barriers that separated them from City Hall and fought the police, who used truncheons and shields to ward them off.

Plight of non-European Jews

Hardest hit by unemployment are the Sephardim or "Oriental Jews" who emigrated from North Africa and the Middle East. Last to be hired, first to be fired, these Jewish immigrants work at the most menial and difficult tasks. From Yemen, Morocco and Iraq, they poured in, financed by the fund drives of the United Jewish Appeal in the U.S. Many of the dark-skinned Jewish immigrants who make up nearly 65 percent of the population are now destitute. They are segregated in Israeli villages and are subject to racial prejudice.

The procession of events culminating in the military action indisputably confirms that Israel was in a state of near collapse. The collusive friendship between the U.S. and the leaders of Israel was to wage all-out war against the Arab people.

The old-fashioned capitalist remedy for an ailing economy was prescribed for the wavering Israeli body economic—one injection labeled "military buildup," to be followed by another labeled "military aggression." The "remedy" had desirable side effects that ameliorated other weaknesses of the body politic, inducing the exhilarating fever of nationalism and chauvinism, which they hope will minimize the chronic ailments of unemployment and blunt the class struggle in Israel.

But the Israeli ruling class did not

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FREE PALESTINE!

Rally challenges 'celebration' of Israel

A grand celebration of 60 years of Israel's existence was marked May 10 at the prestigious Kodak Theater in Hollywood, filled with entertainers and celebrities to push the message that Israel's past and present should be honored. That was the Hollywood fantasy.

Outside the theater, more than 40 demonstrators made it clear that this was an attempt to hide Israel's brutal and genocidal nature. "What about the massacres of children killed by Israel?" shouted Mazen Almoukdad, press spokesperson and member of Al-Awda Right to Return Coalition, which sponsored the rally along with the Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid-Southern California, Free Palestine Alliance, International Action Center, National Council of Arab-Americans and the Palestinian American Women's Association.

Participants included Bev Tang of the Filipino social justice organization BAYAN USA, Martha Rojas of the immi-



WW PHOTO: MAGGIE VASCASSENNO

grant rights May Day Unity Coalition and Don White, member of CISPES-LA.

Speakers reminded those going into the theater about Israel's role as the primary agent of U.S. imperialist interests in the region—maintaining an illegal occupation, violating U.N. law and practicing genocide and ethnic cleansing since 1948.

One Black man passing by stopped when a speaker made the connection between apartheid in South Africa and the struggle against Israeli apartheid. He then joined the rally. With constant chants ringing up and down Hollywood Boulevard, the fantasy Zionists were trying to portray did not go unchallenged.

—John Parker



Clinton’s barefaced racism

In previous editorials this election year, we’ve predicted that in an U.S. election featuring a Black man as a viable candidate for president, the racism of both bourgeois parties would increasingly expose itself—requiring a response and defense of Sen. Barack Obama against racist attacks, despite his politics. Recent remarks—by no less than his Democratic opponent—seem to confirm that assessment.

In a May 6 interview with USA Today—one of the most widespread newspapers in the country—presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said: “I have a much broader base to build a winning coalition on,” citing a Associated Press article that, according to her, “found how Sen. Obama’s support among working, hard-working Americans, white Americans, is weakening again, and how whites in both states who had not completed college were supporting me.” She continued to explain, “These are the people you have to win if you’re a Democrat in sufficient numbers to actually win the election. Everybody knows that.”

Said a day after she faced defeat in the North Carolina primary and a narrow, two-point-margin victory in Indiana, Clinton’s words hearken back to the “good old days” of the Democratic Party’s “Southern strategy.” That strategy attempted to appeal to white voters on the most racist terms, saying in essence that whites would not vote even for a candidate favoring the Black population, let alone, today, a Black candidate. Clinton even took it a step farther when she differentiated the whites who would vote for her as the “hard-working Americans.”

Stumping for Hillary Clinton in Clarksburg, W.Va., on May 1, former President Bill Clinton expressed similar sentiments, while attempting to downplay the racism in them: “The great divide in this country is not by race or even income, it’s by those who think they are better than everyone else and think they should play by a different set of

rules. In West Virginia and Arkansas, we know that when we see it.” (Associated Press, May 2)

The very fact that Obama did so well in these two Southern states, mainly among workers in the cities, shows the fallacy of the Clintons’ racist arguments.

It’s not surprising that the corporate media have expressed few denunciations of these false statements compared to the amount of criticism that followed Rev. Jeremiah Wright’s valid comments on race and justice. As part and parcel of the capitalist system, the corporate media message is always the same—let the ruling class whip up racism; it’s a favored tactic to keep the working class divided. But let the masses call that racism out, and they must be silenced.

Every election year, capitalist-party candidates try to come across as “feeling the pain” of working people and as somehow authorized to speak for them. Once they’re elected into office, though, their actions rarely reflect the rhetoric. Hillary Clinton should know this best. Her spouse, Bill Clinton, signed the so-called “welfare reform” bill that cut off public assistance for some 5 million people—mostly children and their mothers. Those classified as either Black or white were affected in almost equal numbers. The result was a huge increase in child poverty. His administration also ushered in the North American Free Trade Agreement, which brought reduced wages and sweatshop conditions to workers throughout North America.

The only time the message of real working people is brought to light in the corporate media, or reflected in bourgeois politics, is when the people themselves put up a struggle that can’t be ignored. In a time of economic crisis affecting all workers, it’s all the more reason to reject racism and all attempts to divide the working class—because it takes the unity of all workers to effectively and victoriously fight the system that oppresses us. □

Earthquake in China

As a working-class newspaper inside the United States, Workers World would like to express its solidarity with the Chinese people and especially those in southwest Sichuan province. These sisters and brothers have experienced a harsh natural calamity that has already claimed the lives of 15,000 people as of May 15. The powerful earthquake, without warning, shook a vast area that is home to tens of millions of people.

Natural calamities have a social and political component. The Chinese government’s ability to minimize what are sure to be enormous casualties will impact on the world scene. U.S. imperialism and the other imperialist states lurk

nearby like jackals seeking signs of weakness they can capitalize on. Meanwhile, the Chinese, with Premier Wen Jiabao directing efforts in the area, have already mobilized 130,000 troops, police and rescue workers in Sichuan.

One alert: beware the role of the imperialist media. They look at a natural calamity as an opportunity to weaken a country like China, which only 59 years ago threw off its colonial shackles with a glorious social revolution. If force can’t be used effectively, the corporate media will try lies. As we follow the rescue efforts on the other side of the world, we’ll check all reports against Chinese sources where possible. □

From WW of June 24, 1967

U.S. rulers plotted with Israeli puppets

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invade the Arab countries and precipitate a world crisis simply to stave off their own crisis. If they had tried such an act without the go-ahead from their masters in Washington, Ben-Gurion, Eshkol and Co. would have been stopped in their tracks by the imperialists.

Nevertheless, the internal crisis of the

Israeli exploiting classes made them more than eager to go to war for Wall Street against the Arab revolution. Tel Aviv was thus able to create a war hysteria and demand unity of all the exploited Israelis so that Moshe Dayan could put into practice all the lessons patiently learned under the tutelage of Washington’s genocidal high command in Vietnam. □

Myanmar cyclone U.S. hostility hampers relief

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ment of Burma (Myanmar).”

This criminal executive order decreeing expanded sanctions was followed within days by expressions of deep concern for the devastated population. The cynicism and hypocrisy could not be greater.

The new sanctions prevent U.S. humanitarian organizations and individuals from donating money directly to causes within impoverished Myanmar. U.S. aid organizations, such as the American Red Cross, found they could provide only supplies—not personnel or money—to the relief effort under the sanctions rules. While the U.S. corporate media have carried hundreds of reports arrogantly lecturing Myanmar on what is not being done, they are not even mentioning the impact of the new U.S. sanctions that were imposed as the storm barreled toward the country.

Based on weather satellite monitoring, many scientists had tracked the storm as it gained momentum. Nearly a week before it struck land, the Indian Meteorology Department was releasing detailed warnings of route, speed and locations. The Myanmar government, while it received text messages of warning from India starting on April 26, and announced storm warnings on state radio, does not have coastal radars to detect a cyclone’s path, nor did this impoverished country have an evacuation plan.

The U.S. government has been insisting that the Pentagon be given the right to deliver assistance with its own personnel and equipment. Evidently, this rich imperialist country has no other way to deliver humanitarian relief except at the end of a bayonet.

Many other countries, however, have found non-military ways to provide immediate assistance. The Myanmar state radio has reported that international humanitarian aid has poured in from China, India, Japan, Singapore, Italy, Bangladesh, Laos and Thailand. Arriving at the Yangon International Airport with their respective aircraft were tents, mosquito nets, power generators, medicines, water purifiers, dry potato and pork, instant noodles, biscuits, cloth, zinc sheets, hammers and nails, and candles.

The U.S. government expresses outrage that Myanmar, while it accepts aid, will not allow foreign personnel to oversee its distribution. The government-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar on May 9 explained why this is so: “The Pentagon is desperate to station their military bases in our country.”

This is not wild paranoia on the part of the military junta that rules Myanmar. The Pentagon has hardly hidden its interest in overthrowing the regime. This comes as pressure is put on the country to open up and allow the leasing of U.S. bases and U.S. corporate access to Myanmar’s vast nationalized oil and gas deposits.

Here’s how Shawn W. Crispin put it in an article entitled “The case for invading Myanmar.”

“With United States warships and air force planes at the ready, and over 1 million of Myanmar’s citizens left bedraggled, homeless and susceptible to water-borne diseases by Cyclone Nargis, the natural disaster presents an opportunity in crisis for the U.S.

“A unilateral—and potentially United Nations-approved—U.S. military intervention in the name of humanitarianism could easily turn the tide against the impoverished country’s unpopular military leaders, and simultaneously rehabilitate the legacy of lame-duck U.S. President George W. Bush’s controversial

pre-emptive military policies.

“U.S. Air Force and naval vessels, including the US C-130 military aircraft now in neighboring Thailand, and the USS Kitty Hawk and USS Nimitz naval warships, are currently on standby in nearby waters. ... Policymakers in Washington are now no doubt weighing the potential pros and cons of a pre-emptive humanitarian mission in a geo-strategically pivotal and suddenly weakened country.” (Asia Times Online, May 10)

Shock doctrine

Many countries even in the midst of a disaster fear U.S. and Western assistance because it so often comes with strings attached, including onerous debt conditions and demands to reorganize their economy and privatize nationally owned resources.

Naomi Klein’s book, “The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,” describes in great detail how U.S. aid, the IMF and World Bank are used to take advantage of a country in shock, even when it is faced with a devastated infrastructure from a natural calamity of a hurricane, tsunami, drought or flood. Such crises are seen as an opportunity to push through unpopular economic “shock therapy” such as selling state assets and privatizing resources. It’s therapy, all right—for the international bankers, not the affected countries.

U.S. record in New Orleans and Iraq

Missing from all the corporate media’s lecturing on what Myanmar should and could do is any mention of the U.S. ruling class’s own disastrous record in emergency planning, evacuation and relief during and after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

The whole world watched the criminal neglect, racism, lack of planning and total confusion as floods and broken levees drowned the city of New Orleans on Aug. 28, 2005.

This was followed by an arrogant refusal to accept assistance from organizations and individuals seeking to volunteer and an outrageous rejection of international aid. Offers of help from Cuba and Venezuela, which had fully provisioned teams of doctors on standby and offered tons of food, water and a million barrels of extra petroleum, were refused. Even French aircraft and a hospital ship standing ready in the Caribbean, along with German and Russian help, were put on hold.

International camera crews flew overhead filming desperate people clinging to rooftops. More than 20,000 people without potable water, food or sanitation packed into the Superdome and tens of thousands of others spent days at the Convention Center in blistering heat. Emergency crews from around the U.S. were prevented from reaching New Orleans.

Air Force helicopters at a base close by were ordered grounded, although pilots volunteered and pleaded to use them to evacuate people. FEMA and Homeland Security actually blocked aid and volunteers, according to many media reports. Truckloads of water and tons of material sent from around the country were never released.

Two and a half years later, tens of thousands of evacuees are still not able to return to their homes.

Pentagon in Iraq and Somalia

The Pentagon’s record in Iraq is far worse. More than five years after smash-

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Latin American summit confronts hunger crisis

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

With the theme “Sovereignty and Food Security: Food for Life,” delegations from 15 countries met in Managua, Nicaragua, on May 7 to discuss and plan strategies to confront the serious hunger crisis that is affecting the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This presidential summit was the result of an April 23 emergency meeting of four of the five ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America) countries held in Caracas, Venezuela. At that time, Bolivian President Evo Morales, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to sign a special agreement that would develop agricultural and industrial sectors to increase the production of grains like rice and corn, oil-containing beans, meat and milk. According to Prensa Latina, “The agreement reached by the ALBA member countries also favors the setting up of a food commercialization network and includes a joint commitment to create a fund with \$100-million initial capital to allow the implementation of the programs and plans with the initiative.”

However, since the essence of ALBA

U.S. hostility hampers Myanmar relief

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ing their way into an Iraq crippled and weakened by sanctions, the U.S. military has proved unable to provide the most basic human survival needs of potable water, basic nutrition, electricity, emergency health care or education.

If more than 160,000 U.S. troops, 100,000 private contractors and the largest collection of military equipment on the planet won’t provide reliable electricity or potable water in Baghdad, should anyone expect they would do better in Yangon?

Using the excuse of a humanitarian mission in famine-stricken Somalia, the U.S. pushed through a U.N. resolution allowing Marines to occupy the capital of Mogadishu in December 1992. The outraged population drove the Marines out by the following year. The Pentagon had totally miscalculated the popular anti-imperialist sentiment, even among a desperate population.

In Myanmar, mass opposition to British and then U.S. domination is a strong current in the population. Any intervention could meet with stiff resistance, despite the suffering caused by the cyclone.

In all the U.S. media attacks on the government of Myanmar as a dictatorship, it is important to remember that the Pentagon has propped up, armed and financed brutal military dictatorships around the world—from Saudi Arabia and Indonesia to Pakistan, Chile and Congo. Their opposition to the dictatorship in Myanmar is not due to its repressive measures but that it has not undone the nationalization of the natural resources forced through by anti-colonial mass sentiment decades ago. This is what U.S. corporations are determined to reverse.

The anti-war and progressive movement should be wary of the reactionary media campaign around Myanmar. The people there have a right to immediate international assistance free of U.S. demands or sanctions. □

is the integration and well-being of all the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, a larger summit was necessary to address the current food crisis.

The May 7 summit in Managua was attended by delegations from Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Haiti, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, Panama, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Nicaragua. There were also representatives of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, U.N. World Food Program, UNICEF, PARLACEN (Central American Parliament) and PARLATINO (Latin American Parliament).

Opening remarks from each country addressed concerns and proposals about the crisis, but also overwhelmingly pointed to the policies of the imperialist countries as the main culprit of the catastrophe. The television network TeleSUR covered the session.

Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, eloquently stated the need to include fishing in the agricultural and food discussions, noting that small island countries such as his do not have the space for cattle raising and depend more on small farm animals and sea products, but global warming is affecting fishing, since the fish tend to go deeper in the sea. He concluded, “I do not see the Americans helping us, or the Europeans, and in fact, many times when they bring programs for diversification, agriculture production, etc., they perpetuate a fraud among the people, they increase their expectations and there are few things they deliver.”

Vice President Lage from Cuba summed up the real basis of the current crisis: “The essence of the crisis is not in these recent phenomena, but in the unequal and unjust distribution of the wealth at global level, and in the untenable neoliberal economic model, imposed with irresponsibility and fanaticism over the last 20 years.”

President Ortega, who chaired the meeting, conveyed the hunger crisis through the facts: “Data from the international organizations tells us that every 5 seconds a child under 10 years of age dies from undernourishment, from hunger. Every minute that we are here talking, exchanging ideas about this problem, 12 children are dying. And every hour, 720 children under 10 years are dying from hunger!”

The final declaration signed by 12 countries rejected subsidies in the developed countries and the unfair trade that affects the underdeveloped countries. They also rejected the use of food for biofuel. A detailed Action Plan was proposed that would help strengthen the countries’ economies and food production in a sustainable way. A proposal from Mexico, which volunteered to host a high-level meeting on technology at the end of May, was accepted.

Other gatherings about the issue have been taking place in Latin America. The Cuban News Agency (ACN) reported that more than 100 representatives from 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries participated in a conference on child malnutrition in Santiago de Chile on May 6. On May 16-17, the Fifth European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit (EU-LAC) will take place in Lima, Peru. The main themes will be “Poverty, inequality and inclusion” and “Sustainable Development: the environment, climate change and energy.” At the May 7 presi-

‘The essence of the crisis is the unequal and unjust distribution of the wealth at the global level’

dential summit, it was decided that the food crisis be raised at the EU-LAC and all other international meetings in the near future.

Imperialists meet behind closed doors

Nine days before the Managua summit, on April 28, World Food Program Executive Director Josette Sheeran and World Bank President Robert Zoellick met behind closed doors in Berne, Switzerland, with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and executives from 27 U.N. agencies to discuss rising food prices and uprisings in 37 countries due to extreme hunger.

According to ACN, Ban demanded \$2.5 billion in aid to help fight the world food crisis during a press conference in Berne on April 22.

What was Zoellick’s solution to the food crisis? Showing his real class interest, he called on not restricting the export of oil products.

How can the imperialists solve a crisis they created? As Via Campesina, an organization of Indigenous, small farmers and peasants throughout the world, stated in a document entitled “An Answer to the Global Food Crisis” (www.viacampesina.org), neoliberal policies have destroyed the capacity of the countries to feed themselves.

Although they mention biofuel and global warming that affects harvests as causes for the food crisis, they see the lack of sovereignty in food as the most prominent cause: “This crisis is also the result of many years of destructive policies that have undermined domestic food production. ... Farmers have been forced to produce cash crops for transnational corporations (TNCs) and buy their food on the world market.”

The article shows the example of Mexico, which, after NAFTA, went from being a corn-exporting country to one dependent for 30 percent of its corn on imports from the U.S. However, now that U.S. corn production is increasingly used for fuel, there is less available for Mexico. It also mentions the case of Indonesia, which in 1992 produced enough soy to satisfy domestic consumption of the staples tofu and tempeh. After opening its doors to neoliberal policies, cheap soy from the U.S. inundated its market, bringing domestic production down. Sixty percent now is imported from the U.S. and prices have doubled.

Therefore, without the ability to produce their own food due to neoliberal prescriptions, combined with severe climate changes, poor countries are victims to the speculation of the food market and the diversion of food production to biofuel. While food consumption accounts for probably 10 to 20 percent of a person’s income in most developed countries, in the Third World it is 60 to 80 percent. And the products most affected by the current crisis are staples of poor people’s tables, like rice and corn.

No wonder masses have been rising up in Mexico, Indonesia, Yemen, the Philippines, Cambodia, Morocco, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Guinea, Mauritania, Egypt, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Peru, Bolivia and Haiti.

Haiti merits special attention, since it is one of the poorest nations on Earth where the genocidal greed of the trans-

national corporations is obscenely and patently clear. Eighty percent of the population lives under the poverty line and 54 percent in abject poverty. According to Servicio Paz y Justicia en América Latina, “Twenty years ago Haiti produced 95 percent of the rice that its people consumed; today it imports from the U.S. 80 percent of that product.” (www.serpajamericalatina.org).

The extreme hunger in Haiti has forced people to feed their children with “Pica” crackers made of mud, a poisonous remedy against hunger. In Cité-Soleil, the crackers are made with yellow mud from the country’s central plateau, mixed with salt and oil. It costs \$5 to make 100 crackers, but even at that price, many Haitians cannot afford a cracker made of dirt! It might fill a child’s belly, but the mud also carries parasites and potentially deadly substances.

Cuba and Venezuela have stepped up to help the Haitian people. Among other actions, Venezuela sent 600 tons of food on April 13 and 50 farm trucks. Cuba has been providing medical care to the most poor, who did not have access to doctors. For five years, 400 Cuban doctors have been working in Haiti; and 600 Haitian students study medicine in Cuba. According to Haitian President René Préval, for the Haitian people “after God, there are the Cuban doctors.”

People starve while food corporations thrive

In an April 14 press release, U.S. food giant Cargill reported “net earnings of \$1.03 billion in the 2008 third quarter ended Feb. 29, up 86 percent from \$553 million in the same period a year ago. Earnings in the first nine months totaled \$2.9 billion, a 69 percent increase from \$1.71 billion a year ago.” (www.cargill.com)

The release continues: “Cargill posted a third consecutive strong quarter in a year in which the dimensions of change in global agriculture are striking,” said Greg Page, Cargill chairman and chief executive officer. ‘Demand for food in developing economies and for energy worldwide is boosting demand for agricultural goods, at the same time that investment monies have streamed into commodity markets. Relative to demand, world grain stocks today are at their lowest levels in 35 years. Prices are setting new highs and markets are extraordinarily volatile.’”

Monsanto, another U.S. company, also reported huge profits. In a newswire on May 6, the company stated: “As a technology company in agriculture, we have a unique opportunity because our technology creates value for our farmer customers regardless of which crop they grow, where they ultimately sell their grain, or at what price that grain is sold on the commodity markets. ... Monsanto’s strong earnings growth continues to be reflected in dividend payouts. Monsanto has increased its dividend six times—an increase of 200 percent—since 2001.” (www.monsanto.com)

Monsanto is the main culprit behind the genetically engineered seeds that have inundated and destroyed agriculture in Third World countries, making them dependent on Monsanto’s seeds and products. □

Referendo apoyado por los EEUU Oligarcas tratan de dividir a Bolivia

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El 4 de mayo se dieron en Bolivia masivas manifestaciones de indígenas, campesinos/as, obreros/as y estudiantes en contra de un atentado por los latifundistas y empresarios de dividir el país. Estas manifestaciones recibieron muy poca atención de la prensa internacional en los países imperialistas.

El enfoque de estos noticieros era sobre el “referendo por la autonomía” en la provincia de Santa Cruz, el cual ha sido declarado como ilegal e inconstitucional por el gobierno progresista de Evo Morales.

La población indígena en Bolivia ha sido ignorada, perseguida y explotada por 500 años. Pero hoy están defendiendo sus derechos, la unidad de su país y el gobierno nacional dirigido por Morales, el primer presidente indígena de Bolivia.

El imperialismo estadounidense ha estado dirigiendo muy cuidadosamente una estrategia divisoria en Bolivia que planea aplicar en otros países de la región, incluyendo a Ecuador y Venezuela. Santa Cruz es una de las nueve provincias bolivianas. El voto por la “autonomía” está dirigido a desestabilizar el gobierno de Morales y dividir al país, muy parecido a la manera en que Kosovo fue separado de Yugoslavia. De hecho, algunos de los mismos actores están muy ocupados en Bolivia. El actual embajador estadounidense en Bolivia es Philip Goldberg, quien fue figura clave en la separación de Kosovo.

Riqueza concentrada

Santa Cruz, en las llanuras al este de Bolivia, es parte de la Media Luna que incluye a las provincias de Pando, Tarija y Beni. La Media Luna es la parte más afuente del país, generando un 44 por ciento del producto nacional bruto. Una oposición derechista al gobierno de Morales se encuentra allí, con su liderazgo centrado en Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz es la provincia más grande

de Bolivia, con casi un tercio del territorio nacional. Su capital es Santa Cruz de la Sierra, la ciudad más grande del país, con casi 1,4 millones de habitantes. Santa Cruz genera el 30,63 por ciento del Producto Nacional Bruto.

Santa Cruz es el hogar de una oligarquía europea que a su vez es profundamente racista. Muchos de los oligarcas son latifundistas dueños de inmensas fincas que producen productos de exportación como soja, goma y ganado.

Uno de estos latifundistas es Ronald Din Larsen, un ciudadano estadounidense que ha vivido en Bolivia por muchos años y es propietario de 141.203 acres de tierra en Santa Cruz. Según las autoridades bolivianas, Larsen ni siquiera tiene una registración o tarjeta de identidad boliviana, pero aún así se opone activamente a la reforma de tierras propuesta por el gobierno de Morales de dividir estas tierras y ponerlas a disposición de los/as bolivianos/as pobres. Cuando el vice ministro de tierras, Alejandro Almaraz visitó recientemente Santa Cruz, fue atacado por un grupo armado instigado por Larsen, según la agencia noticiera ABI.

Santa Cruz es donde la mayoría de las transnacionales tienen sus oficinas. Es también el lugar donde están las reservas más grandes de gas natural, de petróleo y de otros minerales.

Los empresarios de la provincia están organizados en la Unión Cívica de Santa Cruz, encabezada por Branko Marinkovic, un capitalista croata con estrechos lazos con la Embajada de Estados Unidos. Carolus Wimmer, el secretario nacional del Partido Comunista Venezolano, dijo a la televisión venezolana que algunos miembros de la oligarquía croata en Bolivia habían sido expulsados de la Yugoslavia Socialista después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial acusados de ser partidarios de los fascistas. Los croatas se asentaron en varios países latinoamericanos con la ayuda de la CIA.

Marinkovic y Rubén Costas, el prefecto

de la provincia, son los líderes del movimiento separatista de Santa Cruz. Su ala armada, la Unión Juvenil de Santa Cruz, es un grupo violento estrechamente aliado a la Falange, una organización fascista activa en los años 1940 y 1950 que parece estar reapareciendo.

En búsqueda de empleos, miles de personas del altiplano en el oeste se han mudado a Santa Cruz, en particular miembros/as de las naciones indígenas Aymara y Quechua. En Santa Cruz enfrentan discriminación y con frecuencia, violencia racista, perpetrada mayormente por el grupo juvenil fascista.

Referendo ilegal

El referendo sobre la autonomía es ilegal bajo la constitución de Bolivia. Hasta las Naciones Unidas y la Organización de Estados Americanos, que no son campeonas del progreso, se opusieron al referendo. El General Luis Trigo, jefe de las Fuerzas Armadas Bolivianas, lo denunció públicamente por afectar la “seguridad y la defensa del Estado de Bolivia”. Él destacó que algunos de los artículos del referendo establecen el control local sobre legislaciones, todo el transporte por tierra, río, aire, al igual que sobre las ondas radiales, la seguridad y la defensa.

De hecho, es un proyecto para proveer un pretexto legal para establecer un país nuevo.

Encuestas informales demuestran que la mayoría de la población de Santa Cruz no conocía los contenidos exactos del referendo.

En un intento por engañar, los medios comunicativos oligárquicos reportaron el 5 de mayo que la opción “Sí” aprobando la autonomía ganó por más de un 80 por ciento. En los EEUU, el Washington Post repitió esos números en un artículo en el que se citó a Marinkovic diciendo, “Es un día histórico, y mañana tendremos más trabajo que hacer. ... Tenemos que determinar una nueva senda para Bolivia, y no será una tarea fácil”.

Morales, en un discurso televisado, dijo, “Esta encuesta, que es ilegal e inconstitucional, no fue el éxito que ellos esperaban. ... Entre la tasa de abstención de un 39 por ciento, los votos por el ‘No’ y las papeletas en blanco, eso es prácticamente un 50 por ciento”. La participación para el “referendo” fue baja.

El ministro del interior Alfredo Rada, en una entrevista con Telesur, declaró que las elecciones fueron caracterizadas por “violencia, confrontaciones e irregularidades”. Dijo que algunos nombres fueron borrados de la lista de votantes y 20 personas fueron heridas en confrontaciones con el grupo juvenil fascista. En un vecindario conocido como Plan 3000, baluarte del partido de Morales, jóvenes fascistas provocaron una pelea contra los/as residentes indígenas y campesinos/as, gritándoles insultos racistas. Los residentes contestaban: “Fuera fascistas”, y “Que viva Evo”.

Gente de Santa Cruz que apoya a Morales habían tomado urnas electorales quemándolas como un rechazo al referendo. En el proceso, encontraron muchas papeletas todavía sin usar pero que ya estaban marcadas con la opción “Sí”. De inmediato llamaron a los medios noticieros para anunciar al fraude.

En una transmisión por Telesur, Morales también acusó a los EEUU de patrocinar la oposición. “La embajada de los EEUU es la que encabeza a esta conspiración”, dijo, agregando que “el embajador de los EEUU es el gran defensor de la división de Bolivia, de las actitudes anticonstitucionales, de eso grupos que no desean la igualdad para nuestros pueblos, de los grupos que quieren robar de nuestro país”.

Artículos de varias fuentes mencionan que USAID y la Fundación Nacional para la Democracia han dotado millones de dólares a los grupos de oposición para supuestamente “luchar contra el narcotráfico”. (Vea, por ejemplo, www.coastalpost.com) □

La tasa de desempleo sube a 9,2 por ciento en abril

Por Gary Wilson

Los empleos continuaron desapareciendo en abril según la Agencia de Estadísticas Laborales. La tasa oficial de desempleo es de 5 por ciento. Durante los últimos cinco meses, el empleo en empresas privadas ha bajado.

Más de 800.000 trabajadores/as han perdido su trabajo durante el último año. El desempleo por largo tiempo está profundizándose. Eso se refiere a la gente que ha estado sin trabajo por más de seis meses. Es ahora más de 1,3 millones de trabajadores/as; más de uno/a de cada seis trabajadores/as desempleados/as. A este ritmo, otros tres millones serán parte de este grupo de desempleados/as a finales de año.

“La medida alternativa más detallada de la tasa de desempleo del Departamento del Trabajo— que incluye a la gente que quiere trabajar pero está desalentada de

buscar trabajo y también a la gente que trabaja jornadas parciales porque no puede encontrar trabajo de jornada completa —subió en abril a un 9,2 por ciento, lo cual es casi dos puntos de porcentaje más alto que al comienzo de la última recesión,” dice Chad Stone, economista principal del Centro de Prioridades del Presupuesto y Política.

¿Qué quiere decir Stone con una tasa alternativa de desempleo?

El Departamento del Trabajo discretamente provee una serie de cifras a los negocios y economistas, pero estos números nunca aparecen en los reportajes de los medios de difusión, ni están mencionados por los políticos, ya sean republicanos o demócratas.

Esta tasa alternativa de 9,2 por ciento incluye a los/as que llaman trabajadores/as “desalentados/as”. Son los/as trabajadores/as que no pueden activamente buscar trabajo porque no tienen cuidado para

sus hijos/as o no tienen acceso a transportación. No incluye a los/as desempleados/as que se alistaron al servicio militar porque no podían encontrar trabajo, ni a las dos millones de personas encarceladas. Para la juventud desempleada, la cárcel se ha convertido en el programa de trabajo del gobierno.

Kevin Phillips, en un reporte titulado “El fraude de números” que apareció en la revista Harper’s Magazine, escribe que este índice alternativo es la cifra verdadera, pero que los números más bajos están usados para cubrir la profundidad de la crisis económica.

“Las cifras verdaderas, para la mayoría de estadounidenses que piensan sobre la economía, sería como un baño con agua fría. Basado en los criterios usados hace 25 años, la tasa de desempleo actual en los Estados Unidos estaría entre 9 a 12 por ciento; la tasa de inflación tan alta como 7 o incluso 10 por ciento; el crecimiento

económico desde la recesión del 2001 ha sido mediocre a pesar del incremento enorme en la riqueza y los ingresos de los súper ricos,” dice Phillips.

Phillips dice que esta gran distorsión de las cifras de desempleo fue introducida por la administración de Clinton. “A pesar de la propensión de la administración de Bush de manipular la data (por ej. Irak, el cambio global del clima), no ha podido igualar a su antecesor en las revisiones económicas,” escribe Phillips.

Fue la administración de Clinton la que removió a los/as trabajadores/as desempleados/as por largo tiempo de los números oficiales de trabajadores/as desempleados/as, quitando inmediatamente a 4 millones del número oficial en 1994. Y al quitar a las familias en los centros pobres de las ciudades, la administración de Clinton hizo que bajara aún más el número oficial de desempleo. □